Canvassing for SWP

INTRODUCTION:

In this election, the SWP has an entirely different approach to canvassing from conventional parties. We certainly have every intention of running a serious and professional campaign and to this end:

■ Each constituency will be issued with 2,000 A 2 card posters.

■ There will be a standard SWP election leaflet to cover every household.

■ There will also be a mailshot circular that can be sent to every house. (Each constituency organisation must make provision for sticking labels on letters and mailing it out)

■ There will be a special issue of **Socialist Worker.**

■ There will be a centralised faxing/ e mail of press releases to media outlets.

However we are about **more** than votes. We want to see a serious socialist organisation in the working class that has deep roots. After this election, we want hundreds of more people taking **Socialist Worker** on a regular basis. We want many to join the SWP in the course of the election campaign.

Why? Because at the moment this government is only shadowboxing with the working class. The boom has meant that they have money to make concessions like they did with the nurses. But they also know that they have set off a chain reaction of new claims from the public sector as ambulance drivers and other hospital workers line up for a fight.

After the election the gloves will be taken off by whichever Coalition comes to power. They know that Europe is moving into recession and that major conflicts are looming over moves to a Single Euro Currency. Confrontations are also on the cards in this country—and we want to be ready for it, with lots of new members and supporters.

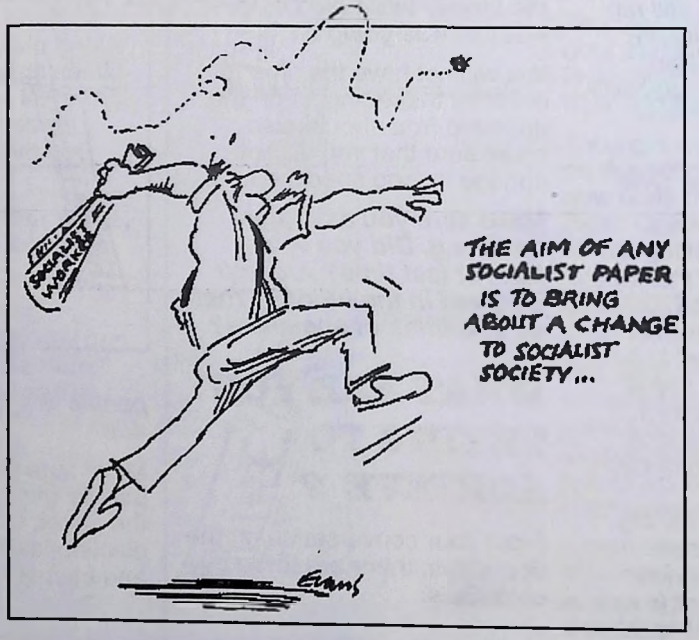
This perspective dictates our approach on canvassing:

■ we shall be concentrating on working class areas—manual and white collar. We do not have to cover every single house in the constituency.

■ We are interested in talking to people and convincing them. We have to spend longer with people than the conventional parties because we have a different message from that put out by the media every day.

Obviously, if there is someone who is just debating for the sake of it—there is no point delaying. But we should start out from the fact that there are thousands of working class people who are looking for answers.

They probably do not know exactly what socialism is but we are going to use this election to get general socialist policies across.



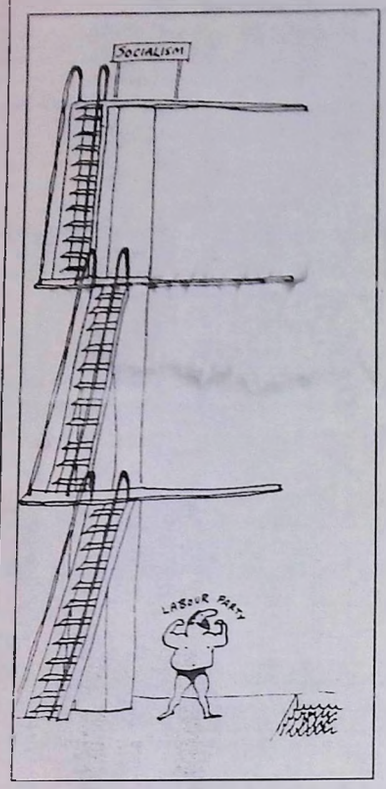
GETTING STARTED:

■ Use whatever technique you want to start the conversation going but something like this works well,

"Hello, I am from the Socialist Workers Party and we would like to introduce our candidate in the next election. He is Jimmy Kelly, a shop steward at Waterford Crystal who has a long record of fighting for workers rights. Have you heard about us before?"

■ Make sure you show we are to the left of Labour and that we are sick of the corruption in Irish politics:

"We think the Labour Party has



sold out working people. It said it would break the Golden Circle but now it is more intrested in its mercs and perks. Irish politics is still run by big business people like Larry Goodman and Ben Dunne who buy and sell politicians. We are out to break that."

■ Move on to what the SWP stands for

" The rich are getting too much in this country. People like Tony O Reilly get £70,000 a day while many live in poverty. We are supposed to have a boom but we don't see it.

"We want a minimum wage of £5 an hour to stop young people being hired for £2.50 .

"We want to tax the big farmers and the business men so that PAYE workers don't pay so much. We want to see the right to retirement at 55 so that more jobs can be created.

"We are a socialist party that thinks the working class can run this country better than those who are only out to satisfy their own greed."

■ Many working class people are cynical because they have seen other parties promise change before. Make sure you indicate that we are not about making fake promises and will not disappear after the election.

"We are not like other parties. We don't think that if Jimmy Kelly gets elected, everything is going to change. He can act as a voice for people's anger and expose the corruption.

"But we are going to have to fight for ourselves—like the way the French truck drivers did or the Dunnes Stores workers did here. We think real change comes from people power.

"We are for revolutionary change—brought about by ordinary people themselves.

"If Jimmy was in the last Dail, he would have been calling for demonstrations on the streets while the Dunnes scandal was going on" .

You will not have the time to cover all these angles on the doorstep. You should also make sure that you do not engage in long speeches.

Make sure you ask questions e.g. Did you vote Labour last time? Are you involved in the union? What do you think of socialism?

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO ACHIEVE ?

From your conversation on the doorsteps, there are three objectives:

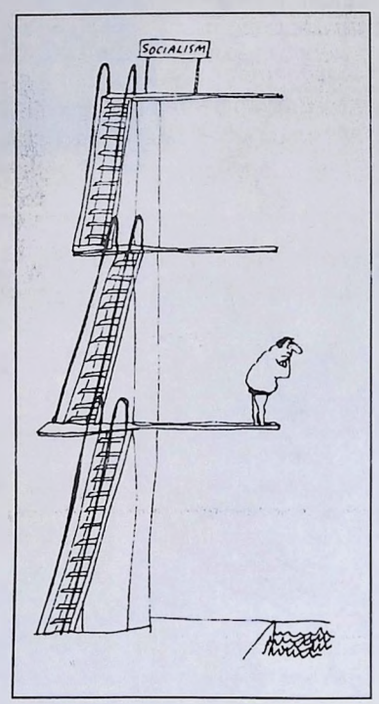
1) "So, would you give Jimmy your Number 1."

Stress that because he is fighting the political establisment, he needs all the No 1s he can get to stay in the race.

If there is any sympathy, keep pushing for a Number 1.

If there is a committed Labour or Workers Party voter (in Waterford) press for a No 2. It is better than going to a right wing party.

2) "Do you want a copy of Socialist Worker? It has got a lot more about what we stand for. Most of the other papers are controlled by big business



people like Tony O Reilly. Only 40p."

Make sure you note down people who are willing to take the paper. Offer them extra election leaflets for workplaces and friends.

3) "Do you want to get involved with SWP. We want to build a big party for the struggles ahead"

It is vital that we push membership. If people say they have not got time or are busy or have other committments tell them the most important thing is whether they agree with the politics or not.

Remember: Membership means taking three papers, paying a sub and doing your best to come to meetings.

After each canvass, make sure you properly record votes, paper buyers and members. We want to get back to our supporters and waverers on the last week before the.ballot.

QUESTIONS

Sometimes people are worried because they think they might not be able to 'answer the questions'. The main thing is simply to listen and give your views as a socialist.

Remember the best socialists are not those who have read all the answers in a book—but people who can explain briefly in their own words what socialism is all about. The following is only a guide to types of questions and answers you might get.

"If there is a minimum wage, wouldn't that lead to a loss of jobs?"

No, if people have more money in their pocket they can buy more. That means more goods will be bought and so there is more of a demand which can create jobs.

A minimum wage just means that the bosses have to take less profits.

"Wouldn't they move out of the country?"

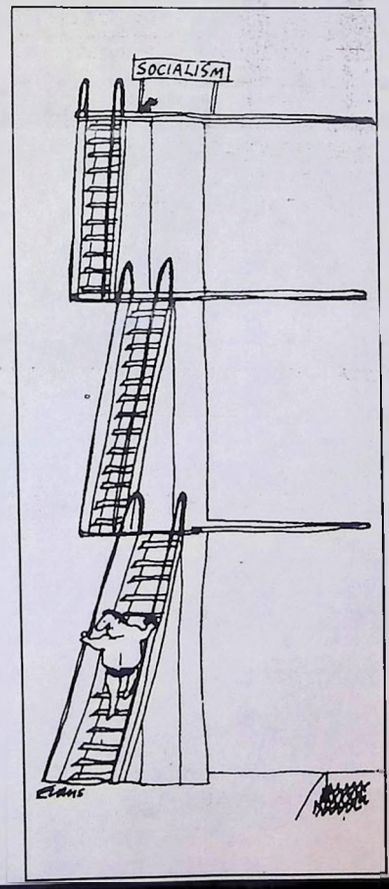
They cannot just up and leave like that. It depends on what we do.

Look at what the Renault workers in Belgium did—they occupied their plant and won the support of 30,000 others workers who took solidarity action. The strikes spread into Renault plants in France and Spain. Renault have still not got out of Belgium!

In any event, the multi-nationals have committed huge investment to Ireland. They need a well educated workforce inside the EU barriers.

"I think Mary Harney is right. We should be cutting taxes."

The problem about Mary Harney is that she does not say how we will pay for tax cuts. She wants to run down



the public service and start privatising. Her model is a Hong Kong economy where unions are weak and there is little provision for welfare. She is trying to be the Thatcher of Ireland.

We think you should tax the rich—so that PAYE workers pay less.

Know your facts:

■ Ireland has the lowest rate of Corporation Profits tax in Europe at 10% in manufacturing and international services.

■ In the last budget the Coalition cut the inheritance tax on big farmers whose land is valued at over £300,000.

■ The biggest spongers in this country are the captains of industry. Each year £1,000 million is handed over in subsidies and tax breaks to industry.

"I want to see a centre left government. Labour may **not be great but at least they are better than the PDs."**

The real problem is that Labour and Democratic Left are imitating the policies of the PDs and Fine Gael.

The right wing parties cut back on the public sector. Labour now does the same. It was Ruari Quinn who tried to tell the nurses there was no money for them and then called for cuts after they won their increases.

The right wing say that business needs yet more incentives. Labour says the same. Quinn has cut corporation profits tax twice and has also cut the tax on directors perks.

Labour was in Coalition with Fianna Fail and the PDS were in Coalition with Fianna Fail. Who could tell the difference in

the policies?

The unions in this country should be pulling out of Partnership 2,000 and getting ready to resist whichever government comes to power,.

"What about crime? What are you going to do about it?"

A lot of crime comes from unemployment and poverty.

We want to get at the causes of crime rather than just the symptoms.More prison places is not going to work.

■57% of prisoners dropped out of school before they were 15.

■80% were unemployed prior to their imprisonment.

■Between 1970 and 1987 the Irish prison population grew by 156%—the highest in Europe. It did not stop crime rising.

We already spent the highest percentage of Gross Domestic Product on prison officers.

One of the reasons is that prisons are schools for crime:

40% of people who go to prison re-offend.

Parties like Fianna Fail who want 'zero tolerance' are hypocrites. They never say anything about the building bosses who break safety laws and cause the death of workers.

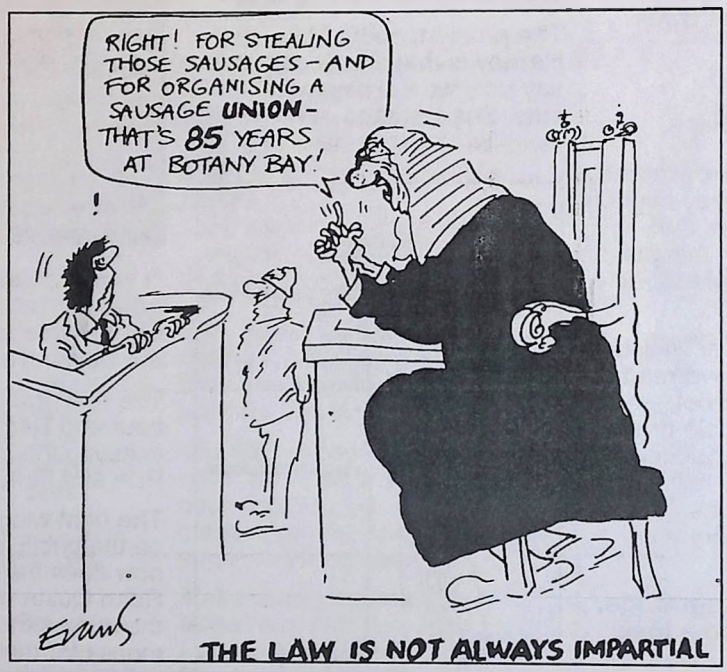
Last year 13 building workers died: the average fine on their employer was between £500 and £1,000.

The biggest criminals in this country are the beef barons. They robbed millions in fraud and caused PAYE workers to pay a fine of £60 million to Europe. But they walk around scot free.

"What's your policy on Northern Ireland. Do you support the IRA?"

We are for workers unity. Catholic and Protestant workers have more in common than that which divided them.

We think that Major and the British government squandered the chance for peace. They covered up for the murders of Bloody Sunday but they set pre-conditions on Sinn Fein entering talks.


RIGHT! FOR STEALING THOSE SAUSAGES - AND FOR ORGANISING A SAUSAGE UNION - THAT'S 85 YEARS AT BOTANY BAY!
THE LAW IS NOT ALWAYS IMPARTIAL

We oppose a return to armed struggle. We think that it can achieve nothing and can only heighten sectarian conflict.

The fundamental cause of the violence in Northern Ireland is the sectarian state . We want to see an end to that state -- but we think that the tactics and policies of the IRA cannot work. They have nothing to say to Protestant workers.

Unless you tell people there is going to be real change on this island where we see workers in charge, you are not going to win Protestant workers to a united Ireland.

"Socialism is dead. Russia proved it was a failure."

Russia had nothing to do with socialism. A small ruling class crushed workers rights and were only interested in building a military machine that competed with the West. The SWP has always opposed these regimes as state capitalist.

Real socialism is about workers control. We should be running the factories and offices because we know more about our jobs than anyone else.

We should be producing what we need—not just for profit.

Socialism is about more democracy and not less. Instead of a vote every four years, we should have a fuller say in running our workplaces and communities.